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THE FORTUNES OF HARALD'S CROSS.

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CHAPTER I.



ROUGH winter wind was blowing round The Priory at Harald's Cross, and the old elm-trees on the drive creaked and groaned beneath the pressure of the gusts.

Within the house all was warm and snug; and Colonel Haraldsen stretched his legs in comfort before the ample fire, on the other side of which sat his son—a tall stripling, for the first time home on furlough.

'Take another cigar, Frank,' said the Colonel. 'They won't hurt you, boy; they are very sound tobacco.'

Frank needed no second invitation. 'I think,' said he pensively, 'I can smoke most things. A man who for six weeks together could get nothing but canteen plug may very fairly bid my Lady Nicotine do her worst. But why, dad, do you set down all your juniors as milksops?'

'Listen to that wind!' said the Colonel absently. 'How the storm howls up the valley! Has your mother gone to bed?'

'An hour ago,' Frank answered; 'and Johnson is yawning about the hall, wondering when you and I mean to let him put the lights out.'

'Johnson is a lazy fellow,' said the Colonel, with a grim smile, as he cut the end off a new cigar. 'Don't go to bed yet, Frank. I've been thinking that next time you come home you may very well be master here.'

'I hope not,' said Frank impulsively, 'for then I shouldn't care to come home at all.'

'Tut! tut! You mustn't get into that way of thinking. One comes and another goes; but there must always be a Haraldsen at The Priory. Still, it was nothing more than a fancy with me; and I may be quite wrong. Listen to that wind!' He broke off and turned half-round in his chair as a gust more fierce than any before shook the windows of the room where they were sitting with such force as threatened to break them in.

'It's from the south-west,' said Frank coolly. 'When it blows that way there's no shelter. In fact, it gathers violence coming up the river's bed.'

'I know,' the Colonel answered; and for a few minutes the two men sat and smoked in silence, till at last the Colonel roused himself, and, getting on to his feet, stood with his back to the fire—a tall, heavy, iron-gray man, looking down with an odd smile at his son, who was still stretched in the deepest chair he could find.

'Frank,' he began, 'I've got a yarn to tell you which it is right that you should hear—partly because it's a family matter, and will interest you, and partly because it may show you that I'm not exactly— Well, never mind that. The long and the short of the matter is, that my mind has gone back to old times, and I'd like to tell you something.'

'Out with it, dad,' his dutiful son replied. 'You'll feel better when you have freed your mind. I know that mood myself.'

His father stood irresolute for a minute or two, and then, sitting down again, drew his chair towards the fire and stirred it to a brighter blaze. Frank watched him curiously.

'Have you ever heard,' the Colonel asked, turning round with the poker in his hand, 'that when I was about your age this estate was on the point of being sold?'

Frank nodded. 'I knew there had been difficulties,' he said. 'Minerals were worth nothing in those days, I understand.'

'True; but that's not the story at all. Mines did not save the estate. All that development came afterwards. What saved the property was a little scrap of parchment out of that great chest.' The Colonel pointed to a huge chest of blackened oak, clamped with heavy iron framework, and bearing on its face the imperial eagle wrought in ironwork.

'The Armada Chest! It was a deed, then,' said Frank, growing interested. 'How was that, father? Was there some dispute about the title?'

The Colonel looked at his son with the ghost of a smile. 'Confidence, mind,' he said. 'There are just three people alive who know the story, and they've all kept the secret like trumps. Don't you be the one to spread it about.'

Frank broke in with loud assurances of habitual discretion; and the Colonel, shaking his head a little doubtfully, settled down to his story.

'I knew nothing about business when I was your age,' he said, 'being just as careless concerning all such matters as you are yourself. There, don't interrupt me. It's a young man's fault; and we all go through the same phases. My father gave me very few opportunities, too, for he never liked consulting with me; and thus it was an absolute surprise to me, on coming home for a little shooting, to find the dear old man closeted half the day with Turton—who had the agency then—and having a face as long as a fiddle. I did what I could. I got my father out as much as possible; and one day, when he had missed three birds in succession, and Old Tom the keeper—you must remember him—was getting impatient, I took the matter into my own hands, and asked him what was on his mind. He answered me in one word—"Ruin." So I thought we had had enough shooting for that day; and, sending Tom about his business, I took the old man to the shooting-box on the top of the hill, and got him to tell me all about it.'

'It was a common enough story, and the details wouldn't interest you, even if I could remember them. The substance of the matter was, that speculation and what he termed some extravagance in living had brought the dear, imprudent old man so low that several of the best farms had been sold already, and another sale was impending which would have left about as much of the estate as you could walk round in twenty minutes. My dear father was full of self-reproach. I believe he felt for me much more than for himself; and, indeed, it was profoundly unfortunate for both of us, seeing that your mother was coming that day to pay us her first visit and get acquainted with her new home; while Sir Charles was to follow her up two or three days later to discuss those settlements which it was now clearly impossible to make.'

'Judging from my own recollections of my maternal grandfather,' said Frank slowly, 'I don't think I could have told him that story without a qualm. But perhaps he was more—what shall I say?—more sympathetic, more receptive, in his younger days.'

'Not a bit—not a bit,' the Colonel answered hastily. 'He was exactly what you remember him, and we all quailed before him. Yes, of course it would have been an awkward story to

present even to the kindest of prospective fathers-in-law; and though I didn't trouble my head much about that whilst I was making matters easy for my father, yet I must admit when I was alone again I felt most uncomfortable. I couldn't make up my mind what to say to your mother, or whether to say anything at all to her; and in the middle of my perplexity she arrived, saw that something was the matter, and got it all out of me.'

The Colonel stopped and pulled heavily at his cigar in silence for a full minute, and then went on in a low voice, much as if he were thinking to himself:

'It was down in the little path by the old tower at the end of the archery-ground. The place is just the same now as when I told her—God bless her! Frank, my boy, if you find a woman like that to put her hand in yours when you're in trouble, you'll be a lucky man, and a happy man—ay, and a better man ten thousand times than you were before.'

'The first time I find a woman like my mother, sir, I shall marry her without waiting to ask your consent,' Frank interposed, brushing the ash off his cigar. 'But we have not got to the box yet.'

'I know—I know,' his father said. 'But you must let me tell my story my own way. Well, we had a long conversation; but after talking it over and over we could only come back to the one point, which was that I should go into all the items of the affair myself, using common-sense to supply the place of business knowledge; and your mother would hear of no delay, but packed me off at once to my father's room—this very room in which we are sitting—bidding me keep my heart up and my wits awake, and do the best I could for her as well as for myself.'

'I can see them at this minute,' the Colonel went on, leaning back in his chair and half-closing his eyes. 'My father was sitting over there in the window, clutching his gray hair irritably, and holding up a paper so as to catch the fading light. Turton sat beside him; and as I came in they both looked up with some annoyance. Turton muttered something which I could not catch; and my father said in a high, fretful voice, "Could you come again in half-an-hour, John? I'm very closely occupied now." At one time I should have gone away; but this time there was too much at stake. So I sat down and said coolly, "That's exactly why I've come, sir. I feel that I've shirked my share in all these troubles far too long; and it's high time that I should take some part of them off your shoulders." I thought the old man did not seem displeased, though he made an impatient gesture; but Turton broke in rather angrily. "Unfortunately it is scarcely possible," he said, "for inexperienced hands to take up complicated matters in the middle." I always hated that man, and his tone annoyed me. "Inexperienced I may be, Mr Turton," I replied, "but I am not

a fool; and what I lack in adroitness I must make up by honesty." Turton glowered at me, and was beginning some furious reply; but my father waved him aside. "Tut! tut!" he said; "this is no time for brawling. Show him the papers."

'Without another word Turton thrust over to me a couple of sheets of blue foolscap covered with statements of account. "That will show Mr John the whole position," he said; and I read it through, while Turton groped among a pile of yellow deeds in that great chest, and my father leaned back wearily in his chair, looking very frail and aged.

"This is so clear that any one could understand it," I said as calmly as I could, for ruin was staring out of every line of the account; "but it only shows conclusions." "That's the advantage of an agent, John," said my father in his tired voice; "his trained faculty helps you to see what the position is." "So it does," I said; "and knowing Mr Turton's great ability, I should be quite content to take from him any statement of accounts which was not so disastrous as this. But when I am presented with what is practically a notice to quit this property, I feel that I am entitled to an amount of detail that I should not wish for in fair weather; and therefore, if you will allow me, sir, I propose to go into these accounts right down to the bottom." "Do as you please, John; you have a perfect right to any information," said my father, and then his lip quivered, and he laid his face down on the desk between his hands, and his shoulders shook. It was very terrible to see him lose his self-command, and all the time Turton went on burrowing in the deed-chest as if he noticed nothing.

"Let me beg you to leave us, Mr Turton," I said at length. "My father is quite unfit for further business to-day." "I'm sure I beg your pardon," the fellow said clumsily; "I'll go now, and just take this paper with me for the time." But my father sprang up instantly. "Put it down," he cried passionately; "put it down, Turton. You know my rule is that no papers from that chest ever leave this room." The agent laid the papers down unwillingly, and muttering something to the effect that he wished only to save trouble to those who had so much just now, took himself off.

'Well, I needn't tell you how I managed to soothe my father when we were alone. Your mother came in at last; and I think the old man was relieved to have no secrets from us any longer, for he cheered up, and we had a quiet evening not unhappily together. I got him off to bed early, and coming back here, I thought the whole matter over, becoming more and more persuaded that there was no remedy, and that for the future the regiment would be the only home I could hope to know. I got tired at last

of moping, and was getting up to go to bed, when, just as I had turned out the lamp, I heard a footstep coming up from the kitchen.

'At any other time I should have thought one of the servants was moving about, but my nerves were a bit excited, my mind was full of suspicions, and I drew back in the shadow of a big bookcase which used to stand just there by the window, and waited to see who would pass beneath the lamp in the passage outside. The room was quite dark, except near the door, where the lamp-light shone in; and I noticed then what somehow had not struck me when the whole room was light—that the old chest was still standing open. "Pest!" I said to myself. "We have forgotten to lock it, and now I suppose the governor has taken the keys to his room;" and I was asking myself what I should do, when I looked up and saw Turton standing in the doorway, looking round him in the darkened room.

'My heart gave a great bound—not, of course, that I was afraid of the rascal, though it was a bit uncanny to meet his eyes searching the very spot where I stood, and yet know that he saw nothing but shadow, while I could see him perfectly. He stood irresolute for a moment on the mat, listening intently, while I held my breath and watched him. Then very cautiously he stepped inside, still listening acutely, stooped over the old chest, took up a small package which lay near the top, and was gone again like a passing shadow before I could make up my mind whether I should stop him or let him go.'

'Really,' Frank observed, sitting suddenly upright, 'if I may venture on a criticism, I think you showed some want of resolution at that stage. I should have taken the fellow by the neck and shaken the life out of him.'

'You think so? Well, but you must remember we all had great confidence in Turton. However, let me get on. I went out into the hall, but the scoundrel had disappeared. I rang the bell, and the old butler came up hastily, rubbing his eyes. "Is Mr Turton in the house?" I asked. "Just gone home, sir," the old man answered, still not half-awake. "He came back for some papers he had forgotten." The rascal was too clever, you see, Frank, not to tell a story which was partly true. There was no use giving chase, even if I had known what the papers were, or why he wanted them, and I went upstairs, more than half-inclined to knock your mother up and tell her all about it.

'However, I went to bed at last, and was up early, for I slept but little, and, moreover, I had an idea that I might find your mother out early too. It was a splendid sunny morning, and sure enough there she was, pacing up and down the long walk in front of the house. I lost no time in joining her, and told her all my story. She heard me very gravely. "Have you told your father this?" she asked. "No. I have not

seen him yet, and I am not sure whether I shall tell him just at present." She nodded approval. "Above all things," she said, "we must be deliberate in what we do. And now let us think what this paper could be." She walked on a little way in silence. "It was no part of the existing accounts," I said at last, "for it was a mere scrap of old parchment, brown and crumpled, with a few lines of writing upon it in some tall spidery hand." She stopped short in her walk, and looked at me. "Then you have seen it and would recognise it?" "I think I should; but, after all, one scrap of parchment is very like another." "Oh, John, John, you stupid John," she cried, half-laughing, "why were your eyes not keener? But he has it now, whatever it was. And now tell me, who was moving about the ruins with a light last night towards one o'clock?" "Nobody, I should think," I answered rather sulkily, for I was not pleased at being called stupid. "Yes, there was somebody," she persisted. "A man came with a lantern, and was moving about the south tower for a long time." "I suppose it must have been Turton," I said carelessly. "You know he has a room in that tower, where he does his business—a damp, cheerless place. I can't think why he prefers it to the house." But your mother was not satisfied. "If it was Mr Turton, what did he want moving about the tower and the bushes with a lantern at one o'clock in the morning?" she

demanded. "My dear child, there are odd tales about that tower," I said rather impatiently. "Do let me beg you not to set the servants talking about it." She looked at me reproachfully. "You think this is idle talk!" she said. "Well, you may be right. And now, tell me what you mean to do about the accounts." "I mean to sift them all," I said. "I will take ruin on no man's word." "Right," she said; "and take this with you as a woman's judgment, which may be right though proof is wanting—that man Turton is a knave." And so we laughed, and went in to breakfast.

"My father was not down, and on going up to his room I found him feverish and ill. 'I have had a miserable night, John,' he said, lying back feebly on his pillows. 'I am ten years older than when this came on me three weeks ago. Oh, my boy! I have squandered your inheritance, which I held in trust for you!' It was exceedingly pitiful to see him lying there, with his thin white hair straggling over his pillow, and a tortured accent in his voice. He was in no condition to hear anything disturbing. I sat down and talked soothingly to him, and he gave me all his keys—a thing which he had never done before. 'Take them—take them,' he said. 'There's but a short time in which either of us can have charge here; and, as I live, you shall have your turn, if it be no more than a day. And now leave me, lad, and I will try to sleep.'

(To be continued.)

THE ROOF OF THE WORLD.



T is related that sunrise once found Mr Pitt still addressing the House of Commons on the greatness of the British Empire, and that as the first rays of dawn smote through the windows of the House he thrilled his auditors by one of those extraordinarily apt quotations, which were commoner in the days when every educated man had his *Vergil* and his *Horace* by heart:

Nos ubi primus equis Oriens adflavit anhelis
Illic sera rubens accendit lumina Vesper.

Since Mr Pitt's time the saying that the sun never sets upon our Empire has become somewhat trite, and it is one the truth of which now forces itself upon the intelligent foreigner rather than upon the Englishman himself. We are used to it; but now that other nations have begun to form 'world policies,' it is with a certain perplexity that wherever they go they find British interests which, if not always thwarting to their own, have at all events to be reckoned with. Sometimes these interests have come to us against our will and in defiance of our avowed policy; sometimes they have been won by our commercial

instincts and insatiable enterprise. But always, wherever he goes, the wary foreigner finds himself stumbling over some outlying flange of Great Britain's body. Or, to put it from another point of view, whether he goes to a swamp on the Nile or a wilderness in Asia, there is always some part of Great Britain to which he can administer pin-pricks to his heart's content. It is with a region of this kind that the present article deals.

The 'Roof of the World' is the picturesque name which has been given to the Pamirs, the watershed between eastern and western Asia. There are several of them—the Great Pamir, Little Pamir, Taghdumbash Pamir, &c.; but we are at present concerned with one only, the Little Pamir. If you look in the '*Times*' *Atlas* map of Central Asia, just above the topmost corner of Kashmir, you will see a tiny lake called Zorkul. Draw a line from it about due east to the Chinese frontier, and another about due south from it to what is wrongly represented as the frontier of Chitral, and you get enclosed a plot about the size of a little-finger-nail, full of those caterpillar-like mountains with which cartographers love to disfigure and obscure their maps, and with only one place (Bozai Gombaz) marked in it. That is the

Little Pamir; and when a line was drawn across it in 1895, it was announced with a great flourish of diplomatic trumpets that the Millennium had arrived for Russia and England in Central Asia. Why the Millennium should have chosen that somewhat inaccessible district for its first appearance was not plain to the man in the street. And it may naturally cause some surprise that a region which is all mountains and no places should be of such deep interest to the two greatest territorial Empires of the world, especially as we find the president of the Pamir Boundary Commission declaring (in a report from which we make quotations in this article) that it is 'a matter of comparative indifference to all concerned exactly where this line is drawn.' A further consideration of the nature of the country will only increase this surprise.

To be more precise, then, the Little Pamir is a strip of land some fifty miles long by five wide, running north-east and south-west, in just the corner where Russia, China, and India meet. The Russo-Chinese frontier is here formed by the mountains of Sarikol, which, at their southern extremity sweeping to the south-east, join the Hindu-Kush and the Mustagh. The northern boundary of the Little Pamir is the Nicholas Range, which is a tributary of the Sarikol Mountains, and runs westward parallel with the Mustagh. In it rises the river Aksu, which, running in a northerly direction through the Great Pamir, turns to the west at the Russian post, and eventually falls into the Oxus at Kila-i-wamar; while the Oxus itself rises here only a few miles from its tributary, and, flowing in an opposite direction, encloses with it before their junction a space of country nearly as large as Holland and Belgium combined. The Little Pamir is, in fact, the valleys of these two rivers—broad, alluvial valleys, thirteen thousand feet above the sea-level, running on their north and south sides up into grassy downs some five hundred feet higher, which on their northern faces are covered with perpetual snow, and are broken at every moment by broad *nullahs* headed by small snow-fields and glaciers.

Marco Polo, who was there in the thirteenth century, thus describes the country: 'You get to such a height that it is said to be the highest place in the world; and when you get to this height you find a great lake [Zorkul] between two mountains, and out of it a fine river [the Pamir, a tributary of the Oxus] running through a plain clothed with the finest pasture in the world; the plain is called Pamir, and you ride across it for twelve days together, finding nothing but a desert without habitations or any green thing'—by which he, presumably, means without trees, for there is no shrub more than eighteen inches high in all these regions. Desert as Marco Polo found them, desert they remain. Even the fauna and flora are scarce, and the scientists with the

Boundary Commission could collect no more than sixty-six species of the former (the most noticeable being the *ovis poli* or Great Pamir sheep, golden marmot, Tibetan hare, horned lark, and *lammergeyer*) and one hundred and fifteen of the latter. Nor is there any resident population. The Kirghiz come, in not very large numbers, to hunt the *ovis poli* and pasture their ponies, of which there are said to be two hundred thousand in the Alai Valley. It is a curious fact that these people, who are now Mohammedans, are the descendants of Christians, the Nestorian heresy having found its way into Central Asia in the fifth century, when bishoprics were established at Herat, Merv, Samarkand, and, later, Yarkand. None of them lasted beyond the fourteenth century; but Forsyth, who visited Yarkand in 1873, found in the wedding rites of the Sarikol Kirghiz undoubted Christian survivals. Thus, the priest—after asking each party, 'Dost thou accept this man [woman] to be thy husband [wife]?'—says, 'These two are man and wife. Whom God has joined let no man separate.' It is also significant that divorce is unknown among them. Of these bygone Christian days no material traces remain; the population has always been nomadic, and passes on, leaving only graves behind it. 'So far as permanent settlements are concerned,' writes one of the Commissioners, 'the Little Pamir is but a valley of the shadow of death.'

Now, it may with some reason be asked, what possible interest can this tract of land, which is good for neither man nor beast, have for us? The common-sense Englishman—and a Frenchman has told us that we are a people *lourdement raisonnable*—as a rule cares very little about lands in which he sees no trade and of which the strategic importance is not clear to him; and it should be added that there is no accessible approach to India for troops from the Little Pamir. We remember Lord Salisbury's 'swamp' in Siam; and yet we notice that on the north-western and northern frontiers of India another rule of policy seems to prevail, and a number of apparently bad bargains are made.

To explain this phenomenon we must first say a few words about frontiers in general. They may be divided into two classes—geographical or natural frontiers, and scientific frontiers. A geographical frontier is usually some natural obstacle—a mountain range, or a sea—which sets a natural limit to a country in any given direction. Less often it is a river, for the obvious reason that a river is more easily crossed, and is therefore less likely to prevent the inhabitants of either bank from overflowing into each other's territory. This is the kind of frontier to which we are most accustomed in Europe: thus our own geographical frontier is the sea; that of Italy the mountains and the sea; while between Germany and France the Rhine has been found an inadequate barrier.

Now, it is a universal law that sooner or later a people must expand up to its geographical frontier. For a time it may be satisfied with artificial restrictions; but eventually it must grow until Nature herself permits it to grow no farther. The history of the Roman Empire in Italy and of our own Empire in India illustrates this. For a long time after the East India Company became a territorial power in that country there was no thought of such an expansion; indeed, at the beginning of this century further annexations were peremptorily forbidden by the Board of Directors. Yet province has been added to province until the whole country, up to the inaccessible fastnesses of the Hindu-Kush, the Mustagh, and the Himalayas, has been brought under British control. We have reached our geographical limits: why should we go beyond? To answer that question we must consider the second kind of frontier, and the conditions which bring it into existence. In the west we have grown accustomed to civilised neighbours, to hard-and-fast divisions of territory—subject, no doubt, to occasional, but rare, readjustment—to stereotyped national distinctions, and to permanent forms of society and government. Thus, though there is no difference of race, language, or religion between the inhabitants of Bavaria and those of the northern parts of the Austrian Tyrol, the line of cleavage is fixed, and no one would think of questioning it, unless in such altogether exceptional circumstances as the winding-up of the German or Austrian Empires. But this was not always so, nor is it so in the East to-day. On the north-western frontier of India, for example, we have a powerful but barbarous neighbour, whose administration and society are liable to all the vicissitudes which befall uncivilised nations, and with whom a disregard of *meum* and *tuum* is a regular habit of everyday life. Further, the hold which the ruler has upon his subjects is fluctuating. These subjects consist of a number of kindred tribes, ready to fight against one another or against the Amir on the slightest occasion, and equally ready, should opportunity offer, to gratify both the Amir and themselves by fighting against us. Moreover, within our own borders are similar tribes, related often by ties of blood and religion to their neighbours across the mountains. They are born fighters; and as we cannot expect them to sit still and be raided by the subjects of the Amir, so it would be intolerable that we should allow them to listen to the offers of British plunder which an unscrupulous and aggressive neighbour is only too anxious to dangle before their eyes. Either state of affairs would mean a condition of perpetual unrest, which would seriously jeopardise the stability of our rule in India. So, beyond our geographical frontier we have, in concert with the Amir, drawn a more or less

arbitrary line, and have agreed that on the British side of that line, though the tribes shall retain their independence except so far as we may find it necessary to put a stop to their intertribal feuds, the Amir shall not attempt to extend his influence, while we ourselves will not concern ourselves with what happens on the Afghan side. That line constitutes our outer frontier, and what lies between it and the geographical frontier is our sphere of influence.

The arrangement is, perhaps, not a very satisfactory one, but it suits our purpose. For the position of Afghanistan in relation to us is, it must be remembered, a peculiar one; it forms the 'buffer state' between ourselves and Russia. When the inevitability of the Russian advance across Asia towards India and the Persian Gulf became patent, three policies suggested themselves. One was to occupy Afghanistan and meet Russia at Herat, the Gate of India. The second was to entrench ourselves behind the mountain ranges of the north-west, and allow Russia to occupy Afghanistan if she chose. The third was to subsidise the Amir, and support him as an independent sovereign between Russia and ourselves, guaranteeing the integrity of his dominions. The first policy was too expensive; the second seemed dangerous, for the presence on our immediate borders of a neighbour like Russia was likely to be a source of far greater unrest than the Amir himself; and so we selected the third.

For a time, while the Russian line of advance was still distant, all went well. But eventually, in her steady onward march, she came into actual contact with Afghanistan. Now, if you look at an old map of Asia you will see Afghanistan represented as an oblong patch of country, with clearly-marked borders, tacked on to the side of India, its northern frontier running in a pretty straight line from, say, Penjdeh to the Dora Pass. These clearly-marked borders, however, existed only in the cartographer's imagination. If you had asked the Amir he would have told you that his territory extended up to and even beyond the Oxus until it ended in the Pamirs. The Amir of Bokhara, on the other hand, would have given a very different version of the facts; and when the Russians set up a protectorate over his khanate they were naturally prepared to lay hands on any lands to which he had the remotest claim. Claims, it will readily be understood, are difficult to substantiate in those parts of the world, where people are always fighting and the bulk of the population is nomad. In 1872, however, the Afghan-Bokharan frontier along the Oxus was demarcated, and no excuse for a farther Russian advance along that line was left. The attention of the Czar's frontier officers was, therefore, drawn farther westward, and a long series of aggressions took place, culminating in the Penjdeh incident in 1885, which brought the two countries to

the verge of war. The worst was, however, evaded, and a commission marked out the Russo-Afghan frontier from the Persian borders to the point where the Bokharan frontier touched the Oxus.

It might have been thought that at last Britain and Russia would live in peace in Central Asia, now that a line had been drawn as far as the Pamirs, which the latter could not cross without violating her treaty obligations. But not so. Farther to the east, in the Little Pamir, there still remained a vulnerable spot, against which the extension of the Central Asian Railway to Margilan and Andijan, and the linking up of these two places with Tashkent, would give Russia a *point d'appui*; and Russian 'scientific expeditions' soon began to make an appearance in those desolate regions which we have just described. It became abundantly plain that not even on paper would there be any security until the Afghan—that is to say, British—frontier was defined right up to the Chinese province of Kashgar; and accordingly a convention was agreed to in 1895, in pursuance of which British, Russian, and Afghan Commissioners met in the summer of that year for the delimitation of the boundary between the Zorkul Lake and China.

The British party, consisting of the staff of five officers, a fighting force of nineteen men, and provisions for three months carried by eight hundred Kashmir ponies, met on 20th June in the north of Kashmir, and made their way, *via* Gilgit, Yasin, and the Darkot and Baroghil (thirteen thousand five hundred feet) Passes into the Little Pamir. The march was not a very pleasant one, for, though the weather was not on the whole unfavourable, the glare of the sun on the perpetual snow was trying; the British members lost all their skin, and there were over one hundred cases of snow blindness among the followers. On 22nd July the Russian Commission (presided over by the Governor of Ferghana himself) was met, as arranged, at the Zorkul Lake. The Russians, as is well known, like to make some display of magnificence in Asia, and their party (consisting of eleven officers, thirty-three men, and a band) was of more imposing dimensions than our own. General Povallo-Shveikovski's tent was adorned with Kirghiz embroidery without, and hung with Bokhara silks within; and the *cuisine* was rather what would be expected at 'a civic banquet than a rough-and-ready luncheon-party in a remote camp in the Pamir wilderness.' The

British officers were received with the greatest cordiality, 'and the foundation was then and there laid of a feeling of good-fellowship between the two camps which was never afterwards broken,' even when difficulties in demarcation arose which called for diplomatic settlement. As a preliminary to work, which was commenced without delay, it was agreed to christen the range which separates the Little from the Great Pamir the 'Nicholas Mountains,' to keep the name 'Victoria' for Lake Zorkul, which has borne it for upwards of half a century, and to name the mountain which lies between the range and the lake 'La Concorde.' On the 10th of September the demarcation was completed, and the line terminated at Peak Povallo-Shveikovski. 'Here, amidst a solitary wilderness, twenty thousand feet above sea-level, absolutely inaccessible to man, and within ken of no living thing except the Pamir eagles, the three great Empires actually met. No more fitting trijunction could possibly be found.'

The advantage resulting from this fixing of the frontier is perhaps negative rather than positive. We have, it will be seen, adopted in the case of Afghanistan and Russia the same policy that we had adopted between ourselves and Afghanistan. Beyond our geographical frontier and our sphere of effective occupation we have drawn a line, to the north of which Afghan—that is, British—influence shall not extend; while Russia undertakes not to interfere to the south. Previously, because of the floating nature of the population and the fact that many of the tribes were divided between territories claimed by both parties, excuse was constantly given for a farther southward move by Russia. At no point along our whole border, from China to Persia, can such a move now be made without violation of our treaty rights; and though this is, perhaps, a doubtful safeguard in the case of a power like Russia, it puts our own statesmen in a stronger position for resisting further encroachments. But when one excuse for aggression fails our great Asiatic neighbour another is not wanting. The extent of the Chinese Empire where Russian territory now meets it is uncertain, and its claims doubtful; and the Taghdumbash Pamir, which lies south and east of the Sarikol, affords another approach to India. Already there has appeared on the political horizon, which the Pamir Commission had cleared, a cloud no larger than a man's hand, which may yet—who can tell?—overshadow the whole heaven.



OF ROYAL BLOOD. A TALE OF THE SECRET SERVICE.

By WILLIAM LE QUEUX.

CHAPTER XIV.—THE EVIL OF THE HAPSBURGS.



Both remained silent, too full of thought for utterance. Now the orchestra was playing a bright air from the *Coupe du Roi de Thulé* of Diaz, and the shadowy figures that had wandered past us during the interval were returning to that gay circle of light where the fashionable chatters were sitting lazily beneath the trees.

'I am glad I have been able to render you my first service, Princess,' I exclaimed at length, in a low voice.

She was sitting beside me, immovable and silent, gazing straight before her, as if trying to devise some plan of action. She was greatly agitated at the discovery of this conspiracy to unmask her. Once I thought she had involuntarily murmured some incoherent words, but next instant doubted whether it had not been the rustling of the tree-tops.

'I can only thank you, m'sieur,' she answered at last, in a voice which sounded sweet and musical. 'The world is very ungenerous towards a woman, be she a workgirl or a princess. I have often thought that the women of the people have a far happier time than we who are ever in the lurid glare of publicity. Indeed—but perhaps you would not believe it—when driving out on Sundays I have often envied the young shop-girl contentedly walking with hand on her lover's arm; for she is free to love or to hate, and can enjoy the pleasures of life untrammelled, with no fear of scandal or of the idle, envenomed gossip of jealous women; the world is hers, and she enjoys it to the full, though she works for her bread and her happiness may not be unmixed with tears.'

I expressed myself fully in accord with her views. Never had the rigidity of life in the royal circle been so vividly brought before me as at that moment, for were not her words in themselves an admission that this man she met clandestinely was actually her lover? Her voice, too, was the voice of a woman overwhelmed by grief, distressed, rendered desperate.

'You are upset to-night,' I said, bending to her in a half-whisper. 'Will you not allow me to assist you?'

'No,' she answered despairingly; 'I fear you cannot at present. In you I have, I know, a friend; in whom I can trust, and with whom my secret is safe.'

'The secret of your love?' I suggested.

'My love!' she echoed. 'No, no; not my love—my hatred!'

'Your hatred!' I exclaimed. 'I do not understand.'

'Of course not. How should you, when you are still in ignorance?'

'But every woman must love once in her life,' I said.

'And love very frequently brings to her unhappiness,' she observed philosophically.

'I trust that is not your experience?' I responded.

Her breast rose and fell slowly. I could not distinguish her face behind the thick veil in that deep shadow of the trees; but I had an instinctive feeling that tears were in her eyes.

'I sometimes think,' she said in a strained, tremulous voice, 'that every woman has a birth-right of woe.'

'You speak as though you were oppressed by some burden of unhappiness,' I said softly. 'May I not know the truth, now that I am your friend? May I not help you?'

'No,' she answered firmly, sighing as she shook her head. 'It is utterly impossible—utterly. The complications are so bewildering, and the circumstances so strange, that you could never believe the truth. It would appear to you far too romantic—too unreal.'

'But tell me one thing,' I urged. 'That man who was present at the ball: who was he?'

'That man!' she gasped, trembling. 'That man is my'— But she stopped short, and held her breath. 'No! no!' she cried a moment later. 'You promised blind obedience to my wish; therefore, remain patient at present. Ask me no questions.'

I saw how agitated she was, how strangely despairing, how utterly desperate. She was just as an ordinary woman haunted by some terrible ever-present dread, fearing every moment that some long-expected blow would fall and crush her. Loving her so fondly as I did, my heart went forth to her. I could not bear to see her thus anxious and consumed by fear, and longed to be able to pour forth my declaration of devotion. Yet I hesitated. The difference in our stations formed a gulf which could never be bridged. Even if I were a millionaire I could never aspire to the hand of a princess of the House of Hapsburg.

'I ask the question,' I said, 'because I, humble man that I am, have your welfare at heart.'

'Ah! I am confident that you have,' she answered, with an air of gracious acknowledgment of my tribute. 'Our acquaintanceship has not been of long duration; but I know you

sufficiently well to be aware that we are, and shall be, the firmest of friends. At present my future is but a black outlook. Some day I trust its aspect will change.'

'A black outlook! What do you mean?' I asked quickly, much puzzled. The idea of the future of the smart and beautiful Princess Mélanie being other than happy seemed impossible. Throughout Europe she was noted for the smartness of her toilets and the sweetness of her face. At Court every one believed her to be merry, irresponsible, and utterly heartless where man's affections were concerned. People had talked and the papers had gossiped about a projected alliance between the Hapsburgs and the royal family of Italy; but those who knew said that Mélanie had treated the young Prince—who was a prig at best—with scant favour; and that after a month at Brandenburg he had gone back to Rome very much disconcerted, while she had openly declared herself glad to get rid of him.

'It is impossible for you to understand my position,' she declared. 'That it is a grave one—a very grave one—is all that I dare tell you. Some day you may perhaps know the truth. Then you will recognise what I feel to-night in thus gaining your friendship.'

'If it is gratifying to you, it is the more gratifying to me,' I blurted forth. 'All that I fear is that I am unworthy to be your Highness's friend and confidant.'

'Ah, no!' she protested. 'I do not extend friendship to all and sundry. People say, I think, that I am proud and exclusive, and that I retain the ancient hauteur of my House. That is what I have been always taught to do. I have been told from my earliest girlhood that, as a royal princess, I am of different blood from the people, and that the latter are of no account in our world. In my girlish ignorance I thought so until about two years ago.'

'You have now formed a different opinion?' I observed.

'Certainly.'

I was puzzled to know whether this tall, fair-bearded man who had crossed the Moorish room in the Palace, noiseless as a shadow, and who had taken such intense interest in my movements, was actually the man she met so often at night. Surely it could not be, for she had declared that she hated him. Why? I wondered.

'The man whose presence at the ball caused you so much anxiety was in the Bois this morning,' I said. 'Perhaps it was as well that you did not cycle with me there.'

'It was for that very reason I did not come,' she answered. 'I had obtained previous knowledge of his intention.'

'I cannot stifle a suspicion that he has some sinister design upon me,' I said.

'Sinister design? What do you expect?'

'That he might be consumed by jealousy if, for example, he saw us as we are now sitting here,' I answered abruptly.

'But you surely do not think that he is my lover—do you?' she cried, dismayed.

I admitted that I had believed him to be.

'No,' she assured me, with a harsh laugh. 'There has never been love between us—only hatred; a bitter, deadly hatred which was once near culminating in a tragedy.'

Her words increased my curiosity. There was here some remarkable mystery in one of the highest circles of society in Europe. Who, I wondered, could this man be?

'From your words, Princess, one would almost imagine that love had never entered your heart,' I said.

'It is legendary that the love of the Hapsburgs is always ill-fated. In the annals of our House are many love-romances—some with very sad dénouements. It is a saying, too, that a dark Hapsburg brings ill-fortune.'

'And you are a dark Hapsburg?' I said gravely.

'Unfortunately, yes,' she answered, in a rather strained, unnatural tone.

'Those who have beauty never bring ill-luck' is an old saying of the peasantry down in Tuscany,' I said cheerfully. 'It, nevertheless, pains me to know that you are troubled by this mysterious dilemma in which you find yourself to-night. I only wish you would allow me to render you some help. Do,' I urged.

'Why?' she inquired, after a moment's pause, as she turned towards me.

'Because—because'—I hesitated in confusion. I feared to speak those words which rose so readily to my lips although I had striven so hard to repress them.

She was sitting erect, motionless; and, in an attitude of surprise, was looking at me with those soft dark eyes, so brilliant and beautiful. She had raised her veil because, she said, it stifled her. There was an element of romance in that meeting, and I had scented danger in the secret of our friendship being known to that silent stranger who had sat unnoticed in the Café Métropole, and who had followed me as far as the Bourse. I felt assured that he harboured some evil intention.

'Why are you so anxious to take upon yourself a burden that you might find insupportable?' she asked in a sweet, half-reproachful tone.

'Because, Princess,' I stammered, unable longer to suppress the burning passion within me—'forgive me for uttering the truth; but I cannot longer conceal it—it is because I love you.'

In an instant she drew away with a little frightened cry, as though in fear of me.

'Love!' she gasped in a tone of blank surprise. 'Ah! I have been foolish—very foolish!'

Why have I allowed you to mistake a purely platonic friendship for flirtation? It is all my fault.'

'It is not flirtation,' I assured her passionately, taking her soft white hand, and holding it tenderly within mine. 'I know that I am foolish, that these words of mine are sheer madness, and that you, in your position, can never marry a humble man like myself. Still, since the first moment that we met, I have been drawn towards you irresistibly; and, sleeping or waking, one face has been ever in my dreams, one name ever ringing in my ears: *Mélanie*! *Mélanie*!—always *Mélanie*.'

'No, no,' she faltered in a broken voice. 'You must not speak like that. We may be friends—firm, true friends; but love is utterly impossible.'

'But hear me!' I implored in a low, earnest voice. 'I cannot be ceremonious with you now that you know the secret which, through so many days, has been wearing out my heart. Do not say that love is impossible. Only give me leave to love you; to think of you as one who in some slight degree reciprocates my passion; give me leave to drop formalities and call you by your Christian name when we are alone, and I will be satisfied. I will ask no more.'

The tiny hand I held trembled. She sighed, and a shudder ran through her slight frame.

'Such permission, were I to give it, could only result disastrously,' she answered sadly, with a calm philosophy.

'But do not withhold it,' I cried in an outburst of desperate recklessness. 'I love you,

Mélanie, with all my soul. I swear I do. I am yours irrevocably.'

She drew away her hand firmly, and seemed to hold herself up with that proud hauteur which she assumed towards all except me.

'No,' she answered in a tone of soft tenderness; 'it is impossible. I regret this very, very deeply,' she added after a moment's reflection. 'The more so because I have looked upon you as my friend—one in whom I had every confidence.'

'I trust I have given you no offence,' I said apologetically. 'My words were spontaneous. I tried to suppress them; but the truth of my affection rose involuntarily to my lips.'

'It is no offence to love,' she answered in a low voice, full of emotion. 'But if you would be my friend, and if you would assist me, do not speak again of affection. Such discussions as this can only be painful to both of us.'

'Then you do love me a little,' I cried joyously. 'If you did not it could not pain you. Come, *Mélanie*,' I added, again taking her hand, 'give me permission to love you.'

'No! no!' she cried hoarsely, suddenly rising to her feet and again snatching away the hand I had taken. 'Your love for me can only bring disaster to both of us. God knows! my life is dark enough, one long interminable tragedy, and I will never sacrifice you as victim. You ask me to encompass you with fatality and evil; but I refuse. We must part. You shall not—you must not—think of me. I am a dark Hapsburg, and my love is fatal—fatal!'

TRANSVAAL REMINISCENCES.

By W. S. FLETCHER, Darban.



MOST readers are apt to regard somewhat disparagingly any newspaper literature that is not as fresh and new as the matutinal roll and coffee; indeed, there is a gradual waning of interest proportionate to the length of time that has elapsed since the broadsheet parted company with the printing-press. Old journals, however, are not without their charm; for in perusing them one seems to live again in the buried past, old and forgotten acquaintances are renewed, and chords of pleasant association are struck in many a sympathetic heart.

There lies before me a bound file of newspapers of no small historic import, and which possess, just at the present juncture of events, a unique and singular interest, as I venture to think there are now but few volumes in existence. *The News of the Camp*, of which there are about forty numbers, contains sufficient details of the last war

in the Transvaal, as well as the incidents occurring within beleaguered Pretoria, to render it both instructive and amusing as a memento of the siege of a hundred days, from the 18th of December 1880 to the 28th of March 1881. It was edited by Charles Du Val, a public entertainer of versatile talent, full of mirth and mimicry, who happened to be in Pretoria at the time, and who subsequently came to a tragic end during a voyage from South Africa to India.

When martial law and a state of siege were proclaimed in Pretoria, it was necessary, according to the plans of the military authorities, that what is known as the Convent, situated on high ground adjacent to the city, should form a part of the defensive works. Trees were cut down, hedges and fences destroyed, houses razed to the ground, and walls loopholed; the whole establishment being invaded, and even the cells of the nuns occupied at night by fighting-men. The nuns were compelled to seek nocturnal shelter in

the little choir attached to their church, and a laager was formed in the vicinity, whither the greater part of the inhabitants repaired. It was no ordinary task to remove a population of some thousands from the town to the camp; and many circumstances, such as frequent heavy storms of hail and rain, with want of sufficient shelter, and the urgent military necessity for all available labour to be employed in strengthening the defences, contributed to the difficulty and hardship. Indeed, the removal could not have been so easily and quickly accomplished but for the calmness, acquiescence, and readiness shown by the townspeople themselves.

Rarely, perhaps, has a newspaper been produced under such singular auspices—a bungalow for a printing-office, with canvas thrown over its unfinished roof, through which the rain freely penetrated, a gentle waterspout running down the compositor's back as he stood with a bandolier of Martini-Henry cartridges over his shoulder, his white apron for a uniform, composing-stick in hand, and his rifle lying suggestively near his frame. The editor's quarters were an army bell-tent and a transport wagon, the space between ingeniously roofed in with a tattered sail stretched on telegraph poles; his work was editing the paper by day, and on guard up to the knees in mud at night, or sleeping in a pair of leather breeches, long boots, and jack-spurs, a bandolier as a necklace, and a bag of cartridges for a bolster, with a carbine at his side: 'peculiarities,' says Mr Du Val, 'scarcely conducive to the satisfactory wording of editorials or the manufacture of news.'

The publishers' notice in connection with this novel literary venture gives intimation of the intention to publish *The News of the Camp* at noon every Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday, the paper containing all the official news and orders, and as much interesting information of camp-life and doings outside as it is possible to obtain. They also add: 'Advertisements will be inserted at two shillings a line, and the paper delivered in every fort at sixpence a copy; the journal possessing the largest circulation of any periodical published in the district of Pretoria, having readers and subscribers extending within a radius of fully one mile and a half from the office of publication.'

The initial number made its appearance on Christmas Day 1880, the leading article, headed 'Peace on Earth and Goodwill towards Men,' conveying the conventional festive greetings, and at the same time commenting on the disaster to British arms at Bronkhorst Spruit, where Colonel Anstruther was killed and nearly three hundred men of the 94th Regiment surrendered to a large number of Boers who lay in ambush. Nothing whatever had occurred to warrant the faintest suspicion on the part of this relief column, which was marching to Pretoria, of being attacked; the band was

playing the highly pathetic air, 'Kiss me, mother, kiss your darling,' when suddenly the alarm was raised, and the little force was quickly surrounded by some two thousand horsemen. It appears that after the surrender the Boers asked for the regimental colours, which were immediately brought out and handed over; but the enemy went away rejoicing, not with the colours of the regiment, but some of those fancy ones kept for theatrical purposes. A member of the Army Service Corps subsequently brought in the real colours to the camp, wound round his waist, after having had a weary tramp of forty miles. Colonel Gillea had the flags folded within those of the 21st Royal Scots Fusiliers, thus paying the graceful compliment to their brothers-in-arms that their colours were safe until those of the guardians were lost.

There is a stirring bit of poetry by the editor, headed 'Christmas in Laager,' the last verse of which graphically describes the situation:

Christmas! our women all anxiously dreading;
Christmas! our men with arms in their hands;
Christmas! our children now curiously treading
The laager constructed by soldierly bands.
Christmas! awaiting the call to the battle;
Christmas! bedraggled and dabbled in mud;
Christmas! enlivened by musketry's rattle;
Christmas! all stained by our countrymen's blood.

Notwithstanding the declaration of martial law and the crowding together of about five thousand people anxious for safe-keeping beneath the folds of the British flag, the amenities of everyday life seem to have gone on in the camp with wonderful smoothness; and men, women, and children are reported to have been much more happy and contented than they might have been expected to be under the trying circumstances. 'Men,' says the editor, 'take well to soldiering, the ladies do their afternoon calls as naturally as if they were in town, and the children find the mud of the camp quite as conducive to health and a clear complexion as any dust-heap they ever played on in their lives. Sickness is happily a rare occurrence, and the rate of mortality is as low, if not lower, than it has ever been known to be in the city from which we have recently fled.' Martial law appears to have been proclaimed on New Year's Day, for it was then publicly notified by Colonel Bellairs, the commandant of the garrison, that the action taken by the rebels in cutting off communication around and preventing supplies reaching Pretoria, and in purloining Government and private horses, cattle, and supplies on their way to the town, had necessitated the commandeering or seizing of horses, cattle, and supplies in the interest of the public service and to meet the requirements of the inhabitants and troops of Pretoria; but in all cases where this was done compensation would be made in due course. It was further notified that no one would be allowed to visit the town or return to the camp without a pass. During the siege the dwellers in the camp were accustomed

to visit their residences in the town from time to time, presumably at their own risk, and they frequently discovered that gardens in which there were fruit or vegetables had been pillaged, certain men attached to some of the corps in camp being suspected. With his customary dry humour, Mr Du Val writes the following, under the heading, 'How to get a Pass : ' 'Go down with an apparently swollen and bandaged foot peeping in a gouty manner from out a broken boot ; and with tears in your eyes and distraction in your aspect, throw yourself on the too susceptible feelings of the adjutant, and it is done. But don't be seen doing a Piccadilly crawl, with a handsome new pair of boots on your pedals and Mary Ann on your arm, through the "deserted village," for adjutants have eyes for other matters than those of military duties, much as you may be disinclined to think it.'

On one occasion, during a heavy gale which passed over the camp, the marquee in which a local pedagogue ministered to the minds of the rising generation was rudely attacked, and became a complete wreck, tent-poles, pegs, and ropes getting mixed up with school desks, slates, pens, pencils, and ink-pots in a confused mass. The master himself was quite enveloped in the fallen canvas, and—states the reporter—would probably have been suffocated had not three of his fond pupils of the fair sex ventured boldly forth, despite of wet ankles and petticoats, and cut a hole in the tent large enough for the unfortunate gentleman to crawl through and save himself from an ignominious and inglorious fate. On another occasion a hospital marquee was set on fire, probably through the carelessness of some passer-by throwing down a lighted match, the outcome of the casualty being the formation of a fire-brigade and the promulgation of stringent regulations anent lights and matches.

Judging from the numerous official announcements in the newspaper under notice, good order and discipline were well maintained. 'All persons living in huts must be out of them by half-past six daily, and remain out till nine. The huts must be swept out and everything left neat and tidy, and, weather permitting, the bedding placed outside to air. Those living in tents must also remain out of them during the same hours, the curtains rolled up, and everything placed outside. All fires in camp must be out by eight o'clock every night, and lights out at nine. Then, again, in every instance of a birth or death taking place in the camp, notification in writing must be immediately made to the garrison adjutant.'

The besieged residents do not appear to have suffered much from ennui, judging from the frequent paragraphs with reference to concerts, cricket, polo matches, tennis, and so on ; while the band of the Royal Scots Fusiliers discoursed sweet music at six o'clock in the evening. Banking facilities were not altogether discarded, for both the Stan-

dard Bank and Cape Commercial Bank advertise, for the benefit of customers, that they will be open for one hour daily. There seems to have been a fair amount of food available, judging from the published list of rations allowed. The following was the daily supply : bread one and a quarter pound, or biscuits one pound, or flour one pound, or meal one pound ; coffee two-thirds of an ounce ; sugar two and a-half ounces ; fresh potatoes half-a-pound, or compressed vegetables one ounce ; fresh or salt meat one and a quarter pound ; preserved meat one pound, or biltong half-a-pound ; tea one-sixth ounce ; salt half-an-ounce. Women were entitled to half the above rations, and children to one-fourth. The principal substitute for wood and coal appears to have been desiccated animal manure, which is prepared in the following way : Having separated all unnecessary extraneous substances, an ordinary brick-making mould is filled with the mixture, and, after being whisked into a tub of water, the contents are thrown out on the ground, where the cakes or bricks are left to dry in the sun. It takes some days to bake the fuel thoroughly, and great care has to be taken to keep the cakes well covered in case of rain. As soon as they are hard enough they are collected and stored in a building erected for the purpose. It may not be generally known that in many parts of South Africa this is the only description of fuel available.

In course of time, as the camp settled down to the routine of daily life, a market was opened, much to the rejoicing of housewives—or rather tentwives—as also of those having gardens in the town, their produce thus finding an outlet at a remunerative rate. Here are some of the current prices : potatoes six shillings a bucket ; onions seven shillings and sixpence a bucket ; milk sixpence a bottle ; apples and apricots five shillings a hundred.

Most of the advertisements in the *News* are of a more or less official character ; but occasionally we come across one of a lighter vein, as witness the following : 'Found, a lady's veil : evidently dropped near the officers' mess. Veil contains a note—contents unread. Owner can have the articles on correctly describing same. Editors expect suitable reward : if lady is young and good-looking, osculatory impressions ; if ancient and plain, she can send a Kafir, who will be handed the articles.'

The following District Order by Colonel Bellairs, C.B., commanding Transvaal District, was issued on 9th January : 'During the action on the 6th inst. a white flag of truce was hoisted from the position occupied by the rebels. The officer commanding the troops consequently ordered the "Cease firing," and sent forward two white flags from different points in response. The rebels then deliberately reopened fire on the officers carrying the flags and on our men who had risen from cover and exposed themselves.

The casualties which occurred to the Second 21st Royal Scots Fusiliers that day arose solely from this treacherous conduct. In order to protect the troops against the recurrence of loss of life from such savage proceedings, it becomes necessary to direct that, whenever a flag of truce is displayed from a rebel position, no one from our side should advance to meet it until it has come, unaccompanied by any armed body, close to our line. The troops will be careful to keep under cover on such occasions, although the "Cease firing" may have sounded, until the officer commanding them directs them to rise.

As time went on everybody seems to have adapted themselves to the exigencies of the situation; and when one thinks that women and children, respectably brought up, had to huddle into and under tent-wagons, scramble through unwholesome meals, stand the chance of being washed out of their tents by floods of rain, and endure all sorts of privation, it is surprising that there was not more murmuring. In the issue of 22nd January appears a conspicuously headed article, entitled 'Good News from Home,' bearing upon the fact that intelligence had been received of the arrival of reinforcements in Natal, and that His Excellency Major-General Sir G. Colley was on the way to Pretoria with a strong column. The editor does his best to inspire hope and patience in the breasts of the beleaguered inhabitants, and urges them to wait a little longer for the promised relief; whereupon one and all settled down with a determination to make the best of circumstances. A few days after, news of the relief of Potchefstroom by British troops from Kimberley somehow or other trickled into the camp, and naturally induced a flush of excitement,

causing every one to be on the tiptoe of expectation for further intelligence from the outside world, and to ruminate on coming possibilities. The issue of 26th March chronicles the fact that one hundred days had elapsed since the flag of the Boer Republic was hoisted in Heidelberg and the communications of Pretoria cut off, and it also gives a reprint of the *Gazette Extraordinary* containing the agreement drawn up by the British and Boer authorities, bearing the signature of Mr George Hudson, Colonial Secretary. The concluding number of the journal contains an interesting account of the battle of Amajuba, a copy of the Boer Petition of Rights, and a general chronicle of events since the proclamation of martial law, in which a very high tribute is paid to the exemplary conduct of both soldiers and civilians, who were for so long a time placed in the closest quarters, and had to share each other's trials and difficulties.

The closing paragraph is thoroughly characteristic of the editor: 'In less than two days, as if by magic, the heterogeneous combination of bullock-wagons, sheds, tents, and so on, wherein the civil population of Pretoria sought shelter during the past three months, has disappeared. The camp has now quite an empty appearance, and the words of Moore can well be applied by the few left, when they recall the generally stirring scene it presented from early morning till the sun went down:

I feel like one
Who treads alone
Some banquet-hall deserted,
Whose lights are fled,
Whose garlands dead,
And all but he departed.'

A RAMBLE ROUND A LONDON DOCK.

By E. R. SUFFLING, Author of *The Land of the Broads*.



THE relatively large number of persons who annually visit the Docks with which the London river is completely fringed on either side for several miles but few bring away with them any lasting impression of what they see. They retain a remembrance of large pools of deep, glittering water, long dark sheds like Titanic bowling-alleys, and big and little ships mostly moored nose on to the long quays—and that is all.

Those visiting the Docks must, to use a nautical phrase, 'keep their eyes lifting,' and they will then be able to individualise the various objects and sights. It will not do to lounge along the miles of quays, and look at a vessel simply as a ship; for in that case the ramble would be tame, monotonous, and uninteresting. Every ship has its individuality, its history, its specific utility, and

its peculiar points of variation from other vessels; and these are the things which give a visit to the Docks such variety and sustained interest.

Let us take a walk together round one or two of the basins of the South-west India Dock. Entering the huge gateway, we nod to the two burly policemen on duty, one on either side, like a modern Gog and Magog, and pass at once to what is vulgarly known as Rotten Row, or, more correctly, the Yacht Basin. Here we have a heterogeneous collection of small craft, which are mostly for sale. We notice small steam-launches, larger cruising steamers, whale-boats, and a great many ships' galleys, gigs, and cutters, all discarded from active service on the sea, but still capable of being used for many years on fresh water. Some of the larger boats, from seven to eight feet wide, would be admirably adapted for fitting with cabins as cruising house-boats, and for the various

purposes of pleasure. Here, also, we see many old river steamers, disused ferry-boats, pontoons, and so many other curious craft that the spot might appropriately be termed The Old Curiosity Pool. Some of the unsound craft are lavishly painted to hide the decayed timber beneath, reminding one forcibly of the old adage, 'Beauty is but skin-deep.' There appears, therefore, but little difference between a decayed yacht and a beauty getting into years: they both paint to hide their defects.

Turning to another basin, we are brought face to face with a long line of noble sailing-vessels, not one of which is less than 1000 tons register. The tonnage of a vessel is to most people a non-understandable quantity; and as so many different measurements are given for one vessel, a few words of explanation may not be amiss.

Vessels are described as of such-and-such registered tonnage, gross tonnage, tons burden, tons displacement, &c. Briefly, these may be summed up as follows:

Tons register is the recognised form of denoting the size of a vessel, and is obtained by measuring its capacity for carrying cargo in cubic feet, eighty of which cubic feet go to one ton. Thus, with certain deductions and minutiae of measurements, the length, breadth, and depth of a ship being brought into cubic feet, and divided by eighty, gives her registered tonnage. In steamships the registered tonnage is always given exclusive of space taken up by engines and boilers, coal-bunkers, &c.

Gross tonnage is reckoned when a vessel's full capacity in every way is taken into consideration, including boiler-space, cabins, &c. This is the form usually adopted for purposes of advertising.

Tons displacement, to the initiated, gives a very good idea of a vessel's size, as it shows the number of tons of water displaced by the hull of a vessel when fully laden, or, as in the case of Government ships, when they have all their guns, ammunition, stores, and men aboard.

Tons burden gives the actual carrying power of a vessel—in other words, the number of tons of cargo she will be able to carry on a voyage. This number of tons frequently means double the registered tonnage of a ship. Harbour and port dues of all kinds are paid on the registered tonnage of a vessel, and by this measurement we obtain the clearest idea of a vessel's true size.

Here is a splendid four-masted ship, *Falls of Clyde*, whose registered tonnage is 1741 tons; but she will really carry over 3000 tons! She is a magnificent vessel, and a walk along her clean oak deck is like strolling along a solidly paved street. She is so clear of obstruction that a one hundred yards sprint race might easily take place along her well-holystoned deck. She is full-rigged—that is, she carries square sails on all four masts—and when under all sail must be a sight to make a sailor's eyes sparkle with delight. At such a time she must be a veritable flying cloud. Yes,

she carries 3000 odd tons. Put a ton of cargo into each of three thousand carts, give each horse and cart a space of six yards, then form them into a procession, and you will have a queue ten miles long! Then, as they drive alongside, the three great holds of the *Falls of Clyde* will swallow up the contents of each vehicle, and still have space for a little more.

It is a splendid sight to look along the quay and see a fleet of barques and ships which sail with a cargo of not less than 2000 tons each. By looking at such a fleet of sailing-ships we get just a glimpse of Britain's commerce; but only a glimpse, for we must remember that for every ship lying in the various docks of the United Kingdom there are ten either on the seas or in foreign ports.

Before we proceed farther let us peep into one of the long, dark, cavernous sheds which line the quays on every side. Coming from the bright sunshine, the interior is so dark that for a short time we cannot distinguish anything, except where bars of light stream in at the open doors placed at regular intervals along the wall next the quay. We can see at these bright spots heterogeneous piles of merchandise of all kinds; and, right at the far end, seemingly half a mile away, we can see a child standing in the doorway.

We will walk through, and notice what is piled up for safe keeping from the weather, which troubles our British isles with its perversity. Here is part of the cargo of the leviathan ship *Massachusetts*—hides, machinery, turnery, maize-meal, leather, broomsticks and hatchet-hafts, boats fitting one inside the other to economise space, and a thousand and one notions which we are pleased to receive from Uncle Sam in exchange for British goods. 'What is that huge pile of casks and wooden pails?' you ask. Well, the casks contain glucose, which is a sticky, sweet, viscid substance from which many of our British luxuries are made. You eat or drink it daily without knowing it. Jellies, soups, jams, confectionery, sweets, and a legion of edibles have a foundation of glucose. Truly, we eat and drink many things that we never meet in their raw state. Does the delicate lady who cools her brow with perfume ever reflect that that sweet-smelling evanescent compound is frequently made from the most revolting and putrid substances? Probably not, or she would turn hot rather than cold. 'And what is in those thousands of wooden pails?' Simply lard—pork lard, from the great pig-sticking establishments of Chicago. It is excellent lard, and what could be a more economical way of packing than placing it in new wooden pails? Package and contents are both extremely useful, and the man who thought of such a simple mode of packing is to be congratulated. We continue our walk through the shed, and notice the supposed child we saw at the farther end grow and grow, till on reaching him he has become a burly

eighteen-stone policeman. The effect of looking down a long shed is the same as peering through the wrong end of a telescope.

Speaking of grease of one kind leads us to grease of another and more valuable sort—whale-oil. Right in front of us lie moored at the diagonal stages several fine whaling-vessels, among them being the *Lady Head* and the *Eric*, both dandies in their sphere of Arctic navigation. A cursory glance shows but little difference between them and ordinary trading vessels; but look closer, and notice the thick fir-planking which protects bows, water-line, and stern from the crushing and bruising knocks of the whirling ice.

Step aboard, and, by the courtesy of the officer in charge, take a look round a Greenland whaler. Everything is as neat and clean as a new pin. You are surprised at the number of berths provided for her crew. Many would suppose her to be a passenger vessel; but it must be remembered that her crew is about six times as numerous as that of an ordinary merchant vessel.

Those tubs lashed to the bulwarks are the crows-nests from which the ocean is scanned by eye and glass ever looking for signs of blubber. When the fishing-grounds are reached these tubs will be hoisted to the mast-heads, forming look-outs for the men, who, on sight of a whale, will excitedly hail those on deck with the cry, 'A fall! a fall! There she blows!' Then the men will scramble down and take their appointed places in the boats.

On whaling voyages the crew sleep in flannel pyjamas, with their ordinary clothes rolled and strapped up to form a pillow, so that when 'A fall!' is called they may lose no time in dressing. Men and bundles tumble into the boats together, and away they go in the keen air, the exertion of racing to the whale keeping them warm. The first boat to the fish means half-a-sovereign to the crew; and, knowing this, they pull with might and main, frequently only donning their clothes after the whale has been struck and sounded.

Below are tiers of barrels for the oil; and by a special favour we are shown the guns for firing the harpoons into the poor leviathan, the long saws for severing the whalebone from the skull, the lances for inflicting deep wounds to hasten the death of the animal after the harpoon has done its work, and the dreadful-looking fenching-knives, with blades a yard long, for cutting off huge rashers of blubber from the sides till nothing remains but the 'crang' or carcass, which, on being released from the tackle by which the whale is turned over and over to enable the men to get the blubber, quickly sinks from view in the black, deep waters of the Arctic Ocean. There, carefully stored, are the huge boots, with steel spikes, used for getting a footing while cutting up; and there are the great coppers in which the blubber is 'tryed' or boiled before being stowed away in the casks.

'Did you ever try the flavour of a whale-steak?' we ask.

'Oh yes,' is the reply; 'once.'

'And was it nice?'

A raising of the shoulders and a slow shake of the head is the very significant reply.

Quite a long article might be written upon a visit to a whaling-ship; but we must not linger, for there are many other sights to see.

Over in another corner of the basin, with its peculiar sheave and wheel armed bow, in close proximity to a public-house window, is the *Chiltern*, a telegraph-ship, fitted with every appliance for laying, repairing, and picking up cables. At her stern are large steel wheels, over which the cable glides on its passage from the great central tank of the vessel to the gloomy depths of the ocean; while similar appliances are fixed at the bows for under-running and picking up a cable for purposes of repair or renewal. To a visitor she appears more like a floating engineers' shop than a ship; and so she really is, for every available nook is filled with forges and machinery of all kinds. There are machines for paying-out cable from the cable tanks; others for taking off the strain of the cable as it goes over the stern and plunges many thousands of feet to the bed of the ocean; machines for cutting and splicing, for pumping, sounding, dragging, and a dozen other operations. Special permission has to be obtained to view one of these wonderful vessels; but leave is readily granted by the company to those who are interested in such an art as cable-laying.

From cables we go once more to cargoes, and visit one or two very large steamships. Here is the *Warriical*, a veritable monster, four hundred feet long and of 4750 tons register. She is like a floating mountain of iron. Her bulwarks, twenty-five feet above the water-line, look as if no seas, even in their wildest mood, could sweep up to them; yet we learn that during a recent voyage, while near the Cape of Good Hope, a sea struck her which laid her iron bulwarks flat upon her deck for nearly a hundred feet on the port side. 'No,' said our informant, a garrulous old 'ship's father' or caretaker, 'there ain't no ways of gettin' away from the sea, however 'igh you build, if it means to get yer. W'y, lor' bless you! I've aknowed seas w'at was mountains 'igh—'igh as a church steeple: 'ow cud yer build a ship w'at would keep yer dry from the likes o' them there—eh?' We allowed we could not answer the problem, and, to turn the conversation, admired the ship's cat and her pretty little kittens, which were tumbling about the idle deck. 'Seven times to Australia that cat ha' bin, sir; and next month she starts her eighth round voy'ge.' Then we look at the berths for the crew, and the cosy little cabins or state-rooms for the officers, and see the two huge galleys in which the food is cooked for the crew and also for passengers, when there are any.

What an improvement is the galley of a modern ship compared to one of the old clippers of thirty years ago! At the grills, grids, ovens, and open fires any kind of dish can now be cooked, be it roast, boiled, or fried; and things gastronomic are in daily vogue which thirty years since would not have been thought of. Hard tack—biscuits as hard as Portland stone and alive with weevils and cockroaches—is no more, even for the crew; for a baker is carried, who every day makes about a hundred loaves of good bread, much to the saving of teeth and time of the ship's company, from captain to lamp-trimmer.

On the other side of the basin lies a still larger ship, the *Devon*, a vessel well over 5000 tons register, and able to carry nearly 12,000 tons of dead weight. Just imagine what Columbus would have thought of such a vessel! I believe his largest ship among the little fleet with which he discovered America did not exceed 120 tons, and could not have been above a sixth part of the length of the *Devon*. And yet Columbus's ship probably carried a crew of double the number of hands which are able to efficiently work this modern leviathan: probably sixty hands would be the *Devon's* complement. Strangely enough, this huge ship has but one funnel and only two masts; but they are at least eighty yards apart!

In a quoin of the quay we notice two remarkable vessels, so jammed in among a fleet of barges and steam-hoisters that it is difficult to obtain a clear view of them. One is a huge flat-bottomed vessel of massive build, designed for raising wrecks, and constructed on the most modern principles for weight-lifting. She is made so that she may be filled with water so as to sink her nearly to her gunwales; then she is bound to the sunken vessel with cable undergirders, and pumped dry. Her lifting power is so great that the sunken vessel is raised from the bed of the sea, and both ship and salvor are then towed into harbour by a powerful little tug.

By her side lies a very curious-looking vessel. She is an Egyptian stern-wheeler, built to float over the shoals and rapids of the Nile, to which she is shortly to be sent. There is no going down long slippery iron ladders to her engine-room, for she has no hold, everything being carried above water-line—cabins, stores, and engines; indeed, the steam cylinders lie exposed one on either side, and a little forward of the very primitive-looking stern paddle-wheel, which looks more as if it belonged to some agricultural implement than a steamship. The reason for this is, that although nearly a hundred feet long, she only draws about one foot nine inches of water; consequently she has no down-stairs. Probably those engaged in the engine-rooms of some of the great liners which ply to the Far East would be only too glad if, when going through the Red Sea, they could bring their engine-room on deck too, instead of seething below in a temperature which sometimes exceeds one hundred

and thirty degrees! What wonder they at such times faint away, and are brought up and laid on deck, where they are brought round roughly but effectively by the free application of pails of water drawn from the tepid sea!

Now, as we walk towards the exit, we notice right ahead of us a venerable old hulk, a relic of the days of Nelson. It is the hull of the *President*, painted white in keeping with its hoary old age. She was once a proud frigate in the French navy, but the early years of this century witnessed her capture, after a stubborn resistance. She was towed into Portsmouth as a prize, and did service in the English navy; then for many years she was moored off Greenwich as a training-ship; and from thence she was towed to her present moorings, where she forms a school of gunnery and drill-ship for the gallant men of the Royal Naval Reserve. Thus we see that, like man, 'a ship in its time plays many parts.'

But the age of oak for shipbuilding is now over; and so rapidly does the modern inventor bring about changes in his material for shipbuilding that the very songs of the nation have become obsolete. 'Hearts of Oak,' which our fathers sang, has now to give way to 'Britannia's Iron Bulwarks'; and the immense Forest of Dean, in Gloucestershire, which was planted with tens of thousands of oak-trees by Government for shipbuilding, now lies almost neglected, the home of the squirrel and the owl.

THE MOOR LOCH.

Among the lonely hills it lies,
Deep, dark, and still;
And mirrors back the changeful skies,
The sun, moon, stars, the bird that flies,
The broad, brown-shouldered hill.

The world's wide voice is silent here:
The cries of men,
The sob, the laugh, the hope, the fear,
The things which make earth sad and dear,
Lie all beneath its ken.

And only he who comes from far,
Seeking the deep
Communion sweet with sun and star,
Knows of the calm and joy that are
In its vast stirless sleep.

For here the eternal soul holds speech,
Yet makes no sound;
With naught but clouds which one might reach,
The black flood, the untrodden beach,
And hearkening space, around.

Time and the things of Time are not;
The path we trod
Ends with the world's end here, and thought
Can neither see nor dream of aught
Save man's own heart and God.

ROBERT BAIN.